

*Claims*

1. A method of enhancing the safety of a stairlift installation having :-  
  
a rail extending between an upper end and a lower end of a staircase;  
  
a carriage moveable along said rail;  
  
5 carriage operating controls remote from said carriage ,  
  
said method being characterised in that a proximity sensor is provided  
which is operable to sense a person in the proximity of said carriage,  
and to render said carriage operating control inoperative.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 including the step of mounting said  
10 proximity sensor on or about said carriage.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein a chair is mounted  
on said carriage, said method further including the step of providing an  
occupancy sensor to sense when load is applied to said chair.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3 wherein said chair is foldable, said  
15 method further including providing a sensor to sense when said chair is  
in the folded configuration.
5. A stairlift assembly having:  
  
a rail extending between an upper and lower end of a staircase;

a carriage moveable along said rail; and

carriage operating controls remote from said carriage,

said apparatus being characterised in that a proximity sensor is provided, said proximity sensor being operable to sense the proximity  
5 of a person to said carriage and being further operable to, in the event of sensing such a person, rendering said carriage operation controls inoperative.

6. An assembly as claimed in claim 5 wherein said proximity sensor is mounted on or about said carriage.
- 10 7. An assembly as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6 further including a chair mounted on said carriage, at least part of said proximity sensor being mounted on said chair.
8. An assembly as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7 wherein said proximity sensor is of the capacitance type.
- 15 9. An assembly as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8 further including an occupancy sensor operable to detect the presence of a user seated in said chair.
10. An assembly as claimed in claim 9 wherein said occupancy sensor comprises a load sensor operable to sense load on a chair base.
- 20 11. An assembly as claimed in any of claims 7 to 10 wherein said chair is foldable, said assembly further including a position sensor operable to sense when said chair is in the folder configuration.

12. A stairlift assembly including:

a rail;

a carriage mounted on said rail for movement there-along;

a chair mounted on said carriage;

5 at least one user operable control to cause movement of said carriage along said rail,

said assembly being characterised in that an occupancy sensor is provided to sense the presence of a user seated in said chair and to activate said user operable control only when a user is seated in said  
10 chair.

13. An assembly as claimed in claim 12 wherein said occupancy sensor comprises a load sensor incorporated in said chair and/or said carriage and operable to sense load applied by a user seated thereon.